

SPECIAL  
REPORT

# First report of political violence

## Crime intervention risk map for local elections, 2024

February 2024



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1

Organized crime intervenes in elections through: i) assassinations, assaults and threats against public officials and candidates, ii) campaign financing, iii) imposition of candidates, iv) mobilization or inhibition of voting, and v) tampering with votes at polling stations.

2

Organized crime will intervene (more than ever before) in the 2024 local elections for three reasons: i) a large number of criminal groups involved in armed conflict, ii) the proliferation of illegal markets, in addition to drug trafficking, and iii) the largest number in history of municipal presidencies in dispute.

3

According to Data Cívica the victims of political electoral violence increased 235.7% from 2018 to 2023. So far in 2024, Integralia has registered 32 victims, of which 7 are murdered aspiring candidates, totaling 8 since the beginning of the electoral process.

4

The states with the highest risk of organized crime intervention in local elections have: i) accumulation of illegal markets, ii) criminal groups involved in armed conflict, iii) weak rule of law, iv) holding of municipal elections, and v) highly competitive key municipalities for crime.

5

Six states are identified as being at very high risk: Guerrero, Michoacan, Colima, Jalisco, Chiapas and Morelos, as well as nine entities with a high risk: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, State of Mexico, Tabasco and Veracruz.

## The intervention of criminal groups in elections.

Criminal groups mainly subjugate municipal governments to build their authority, as this gives them access to valuable resources (such as police collaboration) to: i) operate with total impunity, ii) diversify their activities, and iii) neutralize their rivals.

The control of municipal governments can occur at any time, but electoral processes offer the opportunity to establish or prolong criminal authority from the beginning of new administrations.

There are at least five mechanisms, often complementary, through which criminal groups intervene in elections:



**Political violence:** Threats, kidnappings, aggressions and assassinations against public officials, preliminary candidates or candidates, to force them to cooperate or eliminate them. It is the most common mechanism.

**Campaign financing:** Contribution of economic resources to pay for the campaigns of their candidates.

**Imposition of candidates:** Interference in the process of defining candidates within political parties in order to nominate people linked to criminal groups.

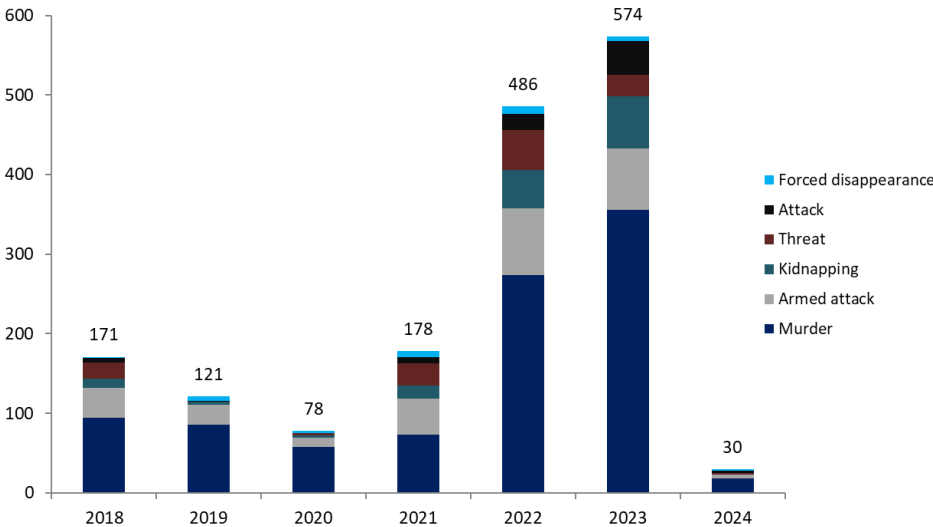
**Mobilization or inhibition of the vote:** Delivery of groceries, cash, as well as threats or aggressions to the population, to increase or decrease votes to benefit candidates linked to criminal groups.

**Intervention in polling stations:** Destruction of ballots, voting booth or voting facilities, as well as threats and aggressions to electoral personnel, to benefit candidates linked to criminal groups.

# Dynamics of political violence, 2018-2024.

According to Data Cívica, disputes between criminal groups for the control of territories have intensified throughout the last six-year term, from 2018 to 2023, victims of political-electoral violence increased 235.7 %.

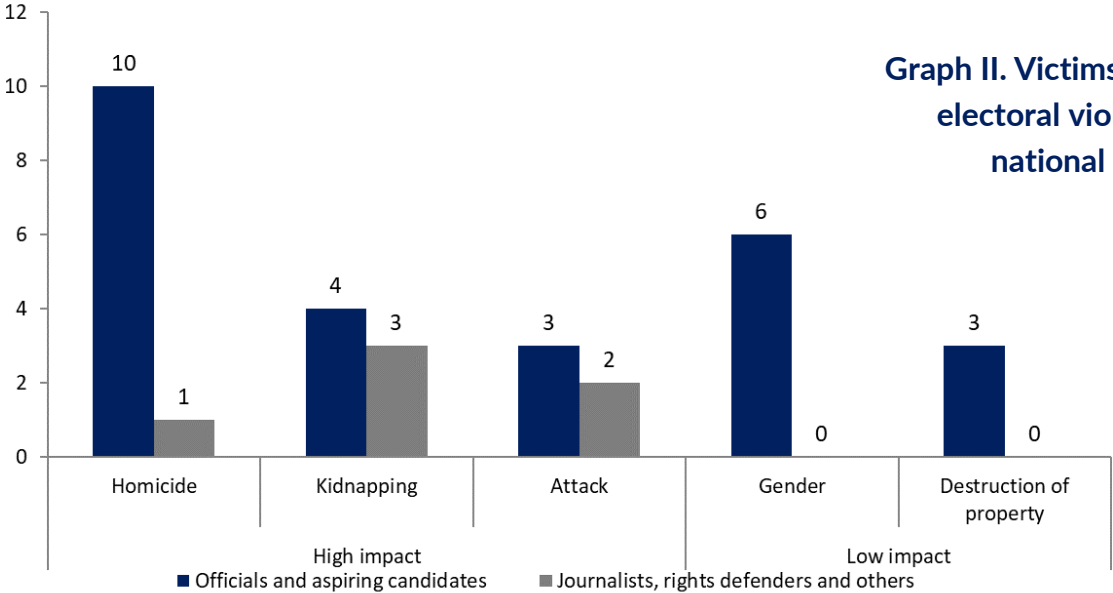
**Graph I. Victims of political electoral violence at the national level, 2018-2024.**  
(Data Cívica)



Source: Prepared by the authors with data obtained from the project “Votar entre Balas” of Data Cívica.  
Note: 2024 with cut-off date as of February 5

On the other hand, in 2024 Integralia recorded 21 events of political-electoral violence, associated with 32 victims; homicides against public officials and aspiring candidates have been the most frequent manifestation.

**Graph II. Victims of political electoral violence at the national level, 2024.**  
(Integralia)



Source: Prepared by the authors with data obtained from Integralia.  
Note: with cut-off date as of February 7 (12:00)

## Mayors are the main targets of organized crime.

Since the beginning of the electoral process in September last year, eight candidates for popularly elected posts have been murdered, most of them mayors.

**Table I. Aspiring candidates killed during the electoral process 2024**

Name of the victim	Position sought	Political party	State
Ricardo Taja Ramírez	Municipal Presidency of Acapulco	Morena	Guerrero
Alfredo Giovanni Lezama	Local Congressman	PAN	Morelos
David Rey Gonzáles	Municipal Presidency of Suchiate	PRI	Chiapas
Sergio Hueso	Municipal Presidency of Armería	MC	Colima
Miriam Nohemi Ríos	City Council	MC	Michoacán
Samantha Gómez Fonseca	Senator	Morena	Mexico City
Marcelino Ruíz	Municipal Presidency of Atlixnac	PRD	Guerrero
Jaime Vera Alanís	Municipal Presidency of Mascota	PVEM	Jalisco

Source: prepared by the authors with data obtained from hemerographic sources.

**Note:** with cut-off date as of February 07, 2024 (12:00)

## Risk factors at the state level

Organized crime is likely to intervene, more than ever before, in the 2024 local elections for three reasons: i) various criminal groups involved in armed conflict, ii) the diversification of illegal markets, and iii) the highest number in history of municipal presidencies in dispute. However, there are states that are more prone than others, according to the presence of five risk factors (Table II).

**Table II. Risk factors for the intervention of crime in local elections**

Risk Factor	Why? The criminal groups...
Presence of illegal markets, in addition to drug trafficking*.	They are interested in territories where they can conduct very profitable business.
Criminal groups involved in armed conflicts*	Need to co-opt governments to tip the balance in their favor
Weak rule of law	They move forward where there is less resistance from the authorities of the three levels of government.
Holding elections for municipal presidencies	They need governments that can offer them greater impunity at the territorial level
Strategic municipalities for organized crime, with high electoral competitiveness	Intervene in processes where their candidates are at risk of losing the election.

## Risk map at the state level

Each of the risk factors listed above (Table II) implies a certain probability of crime intervention in local elections, so no state is safe, but the possibility increases when several factors coincide in the territory (Table III).

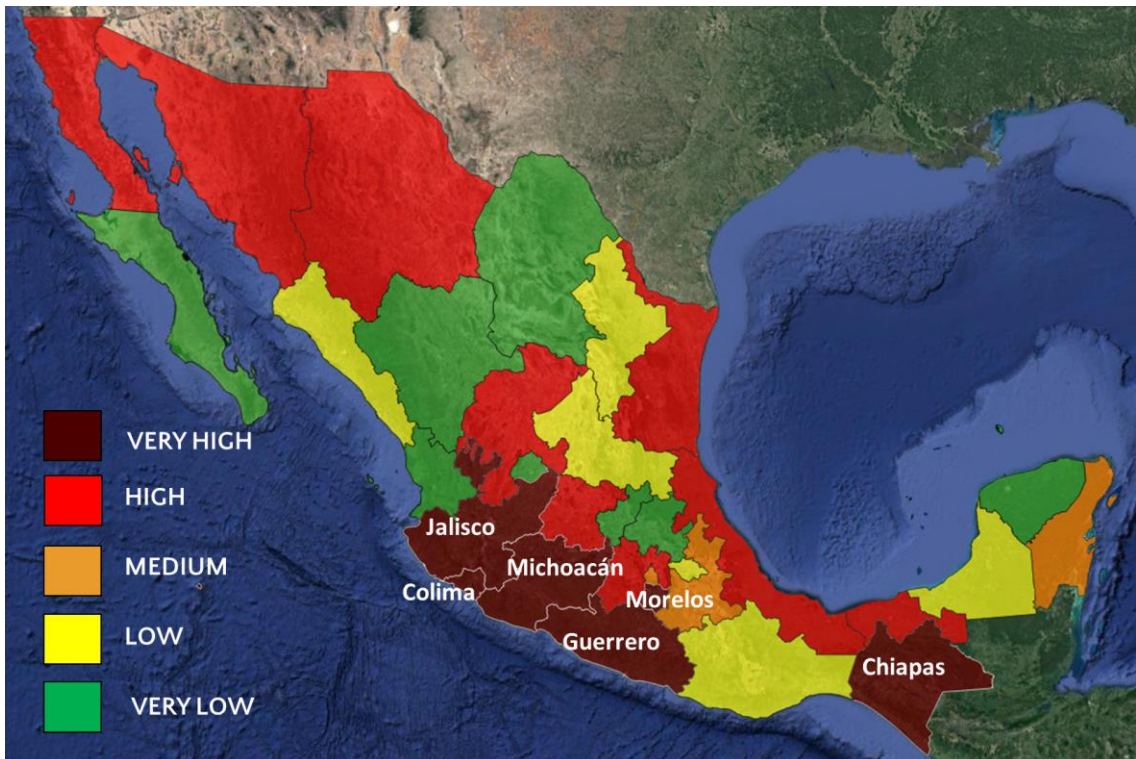
Table III. Risk level of criminal intervention in local elections

Risk level	Number of existing factors
Very High	5
High	4
Medium	3
Low	2
Very low	1

Source: Prepared by the authors

Under these criteria, six states are identified as very high risk: Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Colima, Chiapas and Morelos.

Map I. Risk level of organized crime intervention in local elections by state in 2024.



Source: Prepared by Integralia based on a proprietary methodology

## State zoom: organized crime dynamics in high-risk states

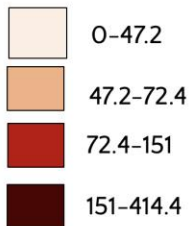
Jalisco is a very high-risk state. In this state, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) maintains control of approximately 80% of the municipalities in the state, where it manages all kinds of economies through its area chiefs. Meanwhile, on the borders with Zacatecas, Michoacán and Guanajuato, it has disputes, respectively, with the Sinaloa Cartel, La Nueva Familia Michoacana and the Santa Rosa Lima Cartel.

This organization will take advantage of the municipal elections to maintain its hegemony in the central zone of the state and to impose itself on the borders.

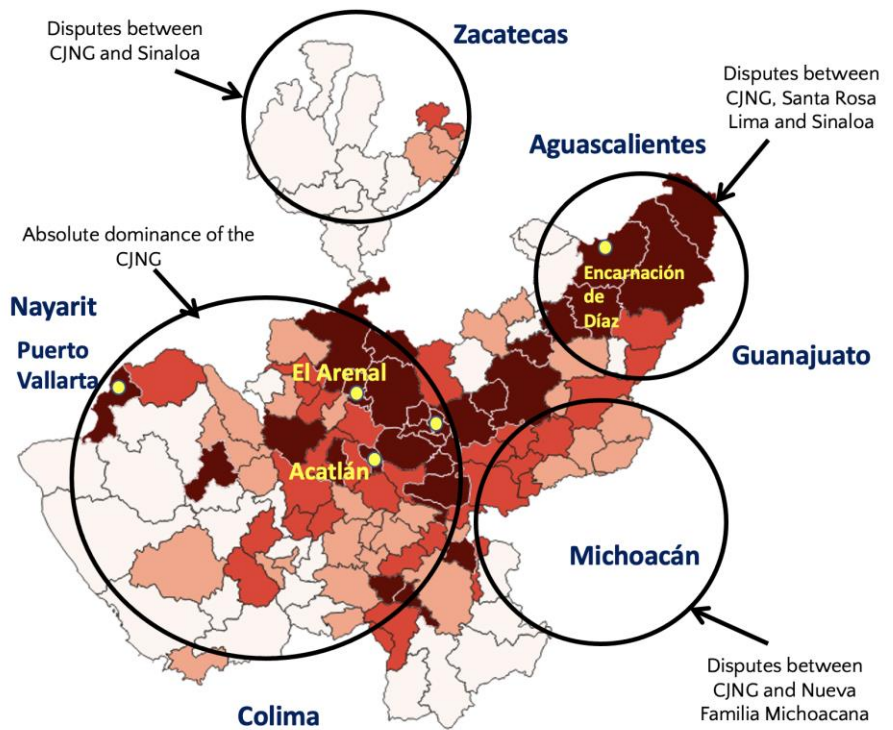
### Map II. Jalisco: CJNG defending its stronghold

Approximate percentage of territory controlled or disputed by criminal groups	80
Number (minimum) of criminal groups	20
Victims of political violence since the beginning of local preliminary campaigns in the state (11/5/2023)	4

Criminal violence associated with organized crime per 100,000 inhabitants, 2023



- Key municipalities for crime, with high electoral competitiveness
- Greater risk of organized crime intervention in the elections



**Source:** Prepared by the authors with data obtained from Sesnsp, Conapo, INE, Oples, local press, interviews with public officials, politicians, academics, journalists and other social stakeholders.

#### Notes

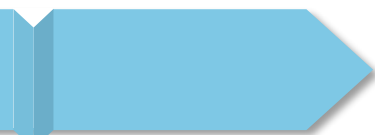
1. Political violence corresponds to Integralia's records as of February 7.
2. Criminal violence includes extortion, femicide, intentional homicide, kidnapping, motor vehicle theft, robbery to businesses, robbery to transporters and kidnapping.
3. Electoral competitiveness corresponds to the 2021 municipal elections.
4. Organized crime has micro-local logics, so each of the states is viewed very differently.

## Final thoughts


Although it is possible to reduce the risks of political-electoral violence for public officials, candidates and political parties in the medium term, at present time the electoral authorities, public security institutions and judicial courts lack the capacity to significantly curb the intervention of organized crime in elections.

If the inertia continues, in the following years the incidence of high social impact crime will increase, including extortion and the collection of ransom, and there will be more territories where criminal groups control local economies, as well as all kinds of political and social activities.


Some ideas for recovering sovereignty in the territories:



All levels of government must recognize that organized crime already rules in several territories and include such a problem, in those terms, within their agendas. Thus, laws, institutions, programs, actions and other instruments necessary to confront it can be created.



The Mexican State must assume the responsibility of fighting criminal groups effectively, not only through military force, but also by cutting off all their sources of income, dismantling their intelligence systems and taking away their social bases.



Discourage the intervention of organized crime in elections. To this end, the burden of proof for the annulment of elections must be made more flexible, so that any indication of criminal intervention, in any of its forms, leads to an ex officio investigation by the electoral authorities that serves as evidence to nullify the process before or after the election.





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